



The HIGH ROAD

"Preserving public confidence in public servants."

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Hawaii State Ethics Commission

October 1993

WELCOME TO THE HIGH ROAD!

Welcome to The High Road, a newsletter published by the Hawaii State Ethics Commission. Through this newsletter, we will inform you about the Commission's activities, the laws administered by the Commission, and how those laws apply to state employees, state legislators, state board and commission members, and lobbyists.

A note about the name of our newsletter: "The High Road" was a motto first used by artist Harry Lyons in a drawing for the State Ethics Commission. That drawing appears at the top of our newsletter. The Commission adopted this motto to encourage all state officials and employees to take the high road on matters relating to ethics.

The High Road will be published every two months and will be distributed to all state offices and agencies, public libraries, and other interested organizations. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact our office at 587-0460.

Thank you for taking a few minutes to read our newsletter and to acquaint yourself with the Hawaii State Ethics Commission.

25TH ANNIVERSARY ETHICS CONFERENCE DRAWS GREAT PUBLIC INTEREST

This year, the Hawaii State Ethics Commission celebrates its 25th anniversary. Established in 1968, the Commission was the first state ethics commission in the nation.

To commemorate this special occasion, the Commission sponsored the Hawaii State Ethics Commission 25th Anniversary Ethics Conference on May 14, 1993 at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Hotel. Nearly 250 persons attended the all-day conference, including members of the Hawaii State Legislature, the Honolulu City Council, the Hawaii Supreme Court, and all city and county ethics boards in Hawaii.

The conference featured a panel discussion on ethics led by Michael S. Josephson of the Josephson Institute of Ethics. Michael Josephson is a renowned ethicist who has conducted seminars across the country for leaders in government, journalism, business, law and education. Mr. Josephson led a dynamic discussion on ethics featuring panelists Kent Baker of KHON-TV; Addison Bowman of the William S. Richardson School of Law; Jerry Burris of The Honolulu Advertiser; Senator Mary George; Senator Bert Kobayashi; Cora Lum of the Honolulu Prosecutor's Office; Lawrence Okinaga of the Commission on Judicial Discipline; and Representative Jackie Young.

Prominent Washington D.C. attorney Robert S. Bennett delivered the conference's keynote luncheon address. Mr. Bennett, who was named Washington's top attorney by The Washingtonian in 1992, served as special counsel to the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Ethics in the "Keating Five" hearings. He shared with conference participants his insights about constituent service and fundraising.

The State Ethics Commission also presented a special recognition award to Senator Mary George at the conference. Senator George was instrumental in helping to establish the Hawaii State Ethics Commission in 1968.

The Hawaii State Ethics Commission's 25th Anniversary Ethics Conference was televised and rebroadcast several times in response to tremendous public interest. Videotapes of the conference are now available. Persons interested in borrowing a copy of the videotape for educational purposes should contact the Commission's office.

PROFILE OF THE HAWAII STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED: January, 1968

COMPOSITION: Five members

SELECTION: Judicial Council of the Hawaii Supreme Court nominates two individuals for each position. The Governor selects and appoints from the list. Senate confirmation is not required.

PURPOSE: To promote and enforce high standards of ethical conduct in state government and to preserve public confidence in public servants.

RESPONSIBILITIES: (1) To administer and enforce standards of conduct provisions of the State Ethics Code, chapter 84, Hawaii Revised Statutes (relating to matters such as conflicts of interests, misuse of confidential information, acceptance and reporting of gifts, misuse of official position, misuse of state resources, representation of clients before state and county agencies, and post-employment restrictions); (2) to administer and enforce the financial disclosure requirements of the State Ethics Code for state officials, employees, board and commission members, and candidates for state elective office; and (3) to administer and enforce the State Lobbyists Law, chapter 97, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

ETHICS REMINDER: GIFTS OF TRAVEL SHOULD BE CLEARED BY THE ETHICS COMMISSION

State employees sometimes run afoul of the ethics code by accepting improper gifts. The State Ethics Code prohibits the acceptance of gifts if it is reasonable to infer that the gift is given to influence or reward the employee in the performance of his duties. One type of gift that may create problems is a gift of travel.

Companies or individuals occasionally offer to pay for the travel costs of a state employee to attend a conference or other event. In some cases this may be an acceptable gift. For example, if it is genuinely in the best interests of the State that the employee attend the event, then acceptance of a gift of travel may be proper.

The Ethics Commission examines a number of factors in order to determine whether a gift of travel is appropriate. State employees can avoid problems by consulting with the Ethics Commission before accepting any gifts, including gifts of travel.

COMMISSION SPONSORS ESSAY CONTEST

Each year, the State Ethics Commission sponsors a high school ethics essay contest. The contest is open to all public and private school students in grades 9 - 12. U.S. savings bonds are awarded to 1st and 2nd place winners for each grade and to a grand prize winner.

This year's contest asks students to write about what they see as the most serious ethics problem facing government today.

Contest materials were sent to all Hawaii high schools in September. The entry deadline is December 15, 1993. Winners will be announced in April, 1994.

GOT A QUESTION ABOUT ETHICS?

Can I accept a gift from a vendor? Will this part-time job cause a conflict-of-interest with my state job? Is it permissible for my company to apply for a state contract? The State Ethics Commission and its staff regularly respond to these types of questions from elected and appointed state officials and employees. The Commission welcomes and encourages these inquiries. If you have a question about ethics, the answer may be just a phone call away. Please contact the State Ethics Commission at 587-0460. You will be connected to a member of the Commission's legal staff, who will discuss your question with you and advise you about the requirements of the ethics laws. All requests for advice are confidential.

The High Road is a publication of the Hawaii State Ethics Commission.

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